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INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 5979
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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7146
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 4403
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1686
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 1688
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 3900
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 4317
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SUBJECT: ELECTIONS UPDATE

REF: LA PAZ 1808

11. (SBU) Approximately 80 percent of the July 2 election results are in, and National Electoral Court officials expect around 90 percent by July 7. Most analysts anticipate high voter participation rates, perhaps approaching the 84.5 percent of the December 2005 national elections. While voter turnout appears solid, many Bolivians submitted blank ballots -- 20 percent and 10 percent, respectively, in Tarija and Pando, the only two departments with official results. In December, by comparison, the numbers were much lower -- 5 percent in Tarija and 3 percent in Pando. Some analysts believe this trend will continue in the other seven departments and speculate that it represents citizens' lack of information about the candidates, general apathy (voting itself is compulsory), or a protest vote.

12. (SBU) Another emerging trend appears to be the growth of the Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party in eastern Bolivia. In December, the MAS won 31 percent of the vote in Tarija and 20 percent in Pando. MAS support increased to 45 percent in Tarija and 37 percent in Pando, both impressive gains in just over six months. While final results are not yet available for Santa Cruz, early indications are that the MAS vote also increased significantly in that department. Such large gains are likely due as much to Podemos' weakness following the December elections (both financially and in terms of its slate of candidates) as to the MAS' wealth of resources and its ability to shift them to eastern Bolivia following its relatively weak showing there in December.
GREENLEE